

**Laois County Council  
Comhairle Chontae Laois**



**HOUSING MAINTENANCE POLICY**

**Approved by  
Laois County Council  
September 2010**

# LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HOUSING MAINTENANCE POLICY



## BACKGROUND

Laois County Council currently has a stock of approximately 2000 houses (Table 1). This includes a diverse range of property types including rural dwellings, apartments, town houses and maisonettes. This housing stock is a substantial capital asset to Laois County Council. It is essential therefore that this asset is preserved and also provides good living conditions for residents of these houses. Repair and maintenance of dwellings is one of the most important and most challenging elements of the social housing service and requires a substantial annual budget (Table 1).

Year	Total Housing Stock	Maintenance Budget
2006	1611	€541,392
2007	1818	€654,988
2008	1948	€746,780
2009	2003	€697,878
2010	2003 (To date)	€652,800

**Table 1: LCC total housing stock and maintenance budget for the last five years.**

The Housing Maintenance Budget is decided at the Estimates time in each year having regard to the resources available. Laois County Council recognises that an effective housing maintenance service requires efficient operating procedures and a high quality customer service. In turn this will lead to greater customer satisfaction and a well-maintained housing stock which enhances the quality of life and social well-being of tenants.

## LEGISLATION

Under the terms of housing legislation, local authorities have primary responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the public housing stock. The maintenance powers of local authorities are set out in Sections 58 & 61 of the 1966 Housing Act and the minimum standards to which local authority accommodation should be maintained are prescribed by Section 9 of the

1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. Provisions for a tenancy agreement are set out in Article 83 of the 1980 Housing Regulations and this confers some responsibility for interior maintenance on the tenant.

Chapter 5 of the 2009 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act which deals specifically with the maintenance of housing stock will come into effect later this year. This Act will replace parts of the 1966 Housing Act, the 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPAIR & MAINTENANCE**

The repair and maintenance of local authority housing is the joint responsibility of both the local authority and the tenant.

The Council shall keep and maintain the dwelling house in good tenantable condition with respect to structural repair during the tenancy, to include the following:

- Replacement of external windows and doors, screens and frames; when and where deemed necessary.
- Replacement of gutters, downpipes, fascias, soffits and bargeboards.
- Repairs to structure of roof including repairs to the roof tiles following storm damage.

The tenant responsibilities are outlined in detail in the tenant's handbook (Appendix 1) and have been summarised in recent correspondence to all tenants (Appendix 2). In the event of a tenant failing to carry out repairs for which he/she is responsible, such repairs may be carried out by the Council and the cost of same to be charged to the tenant. Laois County Council will not accept any liability in respect of damage which may have been caused to the contents of the house as a result of any delay in carrying out these repairs. In addition, it is the responsibility of all tenants to have contents insurance (including cover for flooring) as this is not covered by Council insurance policies.

### **MALICIOUS DAMAGE**

Repairs resulting from willful or malicious damage are the responsibility of each tenant. If the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damages the cost will be charged to the tenants.

### **DISABLED AND ELDERLY TENANTS**

With regard to old age pensioners and disabled persons living alone, the Council will continue to have regard to their special needs and may carry out works which would normally be considered the tenant's responsibility. The caretaker for elderly and disabled tenants may assist in some of this maintenance work.

### **MAJOR REPAIRS BY TENANTS**

Where tenants wish to undertake major repairs or structural alterations at their expense they must first obtain approval for the works. The proposed work must not compromise the future use of the dwelling and the work must be undertaken by a competent contractor. Laois County Council will facilitate tenants to play an active role in the repairs and maintenance service. In addition, Laois County Council may provide reconstruction loans to a tenant where they are satisfied that the proposed works will enhance the value of the dwelling.

### **RE-LETTING OF HOUSES**

When local authority houses become vacant prior to re-letting these houses shall be brought up to a proper standard. The applicable standard shall be consistent with the standard to which the house was originally constructed. Laois County Council will endeavour to ensure that this work is undertaken in the shortest timeframe possible due to the possibility of vandalism to vacant dwellings and also the poor public image of having house vacant where there is a general need for housing.

### **CLASSIFICATION OF REPAIRS**

The aim of Laois County Council is to provide a transparent and reliable housing maintenance service while observing the limits of the financial and human resources available. Repairs are prioritised depending on the degree of urgency and the general classification of repairs is as follows:-

- Emergency

- Essential
- Routine
- Planned

Emergency repairs are required to be undertaken at the earliest possible time and generally within 24 hours depending on the repair. Examples of emergency repairs include:

- Major leak
- Dangerous electrical fault
- Major storm damage
- Failure of entire electrical system
- Lack of water supply to dwelling

Essential repairs are those required to ensure the house remains habitable generally these repairs are undertaken within 2 weeks.

Routine repairs are general house repairs, which are the responsibility of the Council. These are undertaken as resources permit.

Planned maintenance is general repair and maintenance of a preventative or long-term nature. It includes items such as window and door replacement, external painting, electrical or insulation upgrading. This work is normally applied to a number of houses and is generally undertaken by contract.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The aim of Laois County Council is to provide a transparent and reliable housing maintenance service. Good customer service will be primarily reflected in the quality of the works and the response times achieved. In addition the IHouse software system will be utilised to manage the workload by logging and monitoring all requests for maintenance works. The progress of each job will be regularly updated on the system ensuring tenants can readily access information either by phone, email or written correspondence.

## **MONITORING & EVALUATION**

Laois County Council will evaluate and measure its performance through the National Service Indicators. In addition, there will be continuous monitoring

of the IHouse system by the housing engineering staff to ensure that acceptable response times are being achieved.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Housing maintenance staff and contractors will adhere to the 2005 Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act and all associated relevant regulations. Staff are not obliged to work in dwellings that are not compatible with a safe system of work.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Tenants Handbook**

**APPENDIX B**

**Correspondence to Tenants**



12th February, 2010.

**Re: Maintenance & Repairs to Council Rented Dwellings.**

Dear Householder,

Please find attached a section from the Tenants Handbook outlining the tenant responsibilities for the maintenance and repair of council rented dwellings.

Due to the pressure on housing maintenance resources and the need to make the best use of the housing budget, tenant responsibilities as stated in the handbook will be strictly enforced in the future. Emergency works will remain the highest priority; however rent arrears will be taken into account when carrying out routine works.

In the case of old age pensioners and disabled persons living alone, the Council will continue to have regard to their special needs and may carry out works which would normally be considered the tenant's responsibility.

Please note that all tenants must have contents insurance, including floor coverings, as this is not covered by Council insurance policies. In addition, repairs resulting from wilful or malicious damage is the responsibility of each tenant, and if the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damages, the cost will be charged to the tenants.

I also wish to advise that the Tenant Liaison Officer will be calling to all tenants to inspect the dwellings/gardens for good housekeeping. It is important that good housekeeping habits are maintained as this affects the insurance cover on the property.

Yours sincerely,

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**Michael Rainey,  
Senior Executive Officer,  
Housing Department**

## **MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS**

Each tenant on the signing of the Tenancy Agreement, assumes responsibility for repairs of a non-structural nature and for maintaining the house in a clean and tidy condition. Without prejudice to the generality of this responsibility, the following are examples of the type of repairs for which each tenant is responsible:

### **INTERNAL REPAIRS:**

- a. Internal Plaster Cracks - non-structural.
- b. Repairs to or replacement of cupboards, wardrobes, kitchen units and their doors, hinges, handles, locks, catches and drawers.\*
- c. Curtain rails and window boards.
- d. Chimney sweeping (Annually at least) and any work required because of failure to sweep chimney.
- e. Repairs arising from condensation damage.
- f. Internal woodwork such as doors and skirting boards.\*
- g. Ventilator covers.
- h. Internal decoration.
- i. Basket/grate in all fireplaces and tiles on fireplace hearths.\*

\* Where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

### **DOORS AND WINDOWS:**

- a. External and internal locks, hinges and handles.\*
- b. Window stays, catches and restrictors.\*
- c. Draught proofing of doors and windows.
- d. Replacement of broken glass
- e. Permavents where fitted.
- f. Internal tiles on window sills and window boards.
- g. Letter boxes.
- h. Timberwork on windows, internally, should be painted by the tenant on a regular basis (maximum interval of five years).

\* Where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

### **EXTERNAL REPAIRS:**

- a. Maintenance of gardens and hedges in tidy conditions.
- b. Repairs to, or replacement of fences and garden boundary walls.
- c. Repairs to, replacement of, and re-erection of front gates, side gates or doors leading to garden areas, including their support and frames.
- d. Fuel sheds or outhouses: roof repairs thereto and repair or replacement of doors, locks, door handles or catches.
- e. Cleaning of silt, leaves or other deposits from gutters.
- f. Control of pests i.e. rats, mice, ants, etc.

### **ELECTRIAL REPAIRS:**

- a.** Ceiling roses, lamp holders and plugs.
- b.** Fuses, except mains fuses.
- c.** Elements for electric fires. All repairs to electric appliances, fires and heaters not installed by the Council.
- d.** Replacement of light bulbs and any bulbs that may be required for pilot lights.
- e.** The repair of light switches.\*

\* Except where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

### **SEPTIC TANKS**

- a.** Desludging septic tanks for rural dwellings.

### **PLUMBING REPAIRS:**

- a.** Cleaning of gully traps.
- b.** Cost of clearing of blocked house drains and blocked toilets.
- c.** Replacement or repair of waste pipes inside the dwelling.
- d.** Replacement or repair of taps on sink unit and wash-hand basins including leaking and dripping taps.\*
- e.** Replacement or repair of toilet bowl.\*
- f.** Replacement or repair of wash-hand basin.\*
- g.** Replacement or repair of bath.\*
- h.** Replacement or repair of toilet cistern and cover.\*
- i.** Replacement or repair of ball-cock or other water flotation control unit within the unit.\*
- j.** Replacement or repair of toilet seats, chains and handles.\*
- k.** Replacement of shower heads and shower doors.\*

\* Except where damage is caused by normal wear and tear, these works will be carried out by Laois County Council subject to inspection.

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